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Address.

It were not to have been expected that those who are united to promote an object of such magnitude and importance, as the abolition of war, should be permitted to proceed in their design, without encountering great difference of opinion, both with regard to its expediency and its practicability. The world has grown up with this custom from its earliest infancy—it has formed from time immemorial the pastime of kings and the principal occupation of nations. It has given to the history of our race, its chief and most characteristic features, and has been connected with the political and social institutions of nearly all mankind. It is not strange then, that a project, which if successful, is to bring about so great a revolution in the feelings and conduct both of rulers and people,—to effect so extensive an alteration in the political relations of nations, and produce so important a change in the whole future history of the world, should meet, at the very threshold, those who doubt whether the object be attainable, and if attainable, whether it be expedient.

It has been maintained by some, that, in the present condition of man, war is necessary and natural; that its evil are more than counterbalanced by its good effects; that it is promotive, on the whole, of ad-

vancement in science, learning and the arts; that it is the nurse of genius, the school of noble and generous feelings, and contributes at once to national prosperity and to the formation of an elevated national character.

The plan which I have marked out to myself does not permit me to enter into a detailed consideration of this statement, or it would not be difficult, I conceive, to show that it has in reality but little force. It may, however, be briefly remarked, that the necessity for the continuance of war, is no other than that which exists for the continuance of all antiquated evils and abuses; a necessity created by the very existence of the evil itself. And as it regards its happy influence upon the character and prosperity of a nation, it would have been strange indeed, if the same genius, the same vigour of intellect, which made a people successful in war, should not also make them successful in the cultivation of letters, arts, and sciences. But it might be pertinently asked, are these advantages the result of unsuccessful as well as of successful war? Is a conquered people stimulated to improvement by humiliation and defeat? Besides, if the influence of war be thus beneficial, what has become of the thousand nations, that have existed only to wage interminable wars, but of whom we have only heard, as barbarous, cruel and ignorant? The truth would, I apprehend, be found in a position exactly opposite to that contended for—and it would appear, that mankind instead of being accelerated in the career of improvement, by this custom, have

been slowly emerging from a state of barbarism in spite of it.

To objections of this kind, however, it is not, I trust, necessary, before this audience, at this time, and in this place, to urge a more full reply. There are those of another class, which deserve a more serious attention—objections founded upon a view of the obstacles which exist to the accomplishment of the proposed object.—These obstacles in the opinion of many, are insurmountable. They compare them with the apparently small means by which they are to be subdued, and are struck with dismay at an enterprize which seems to them so desperate. But they greatly mistake, when they imagine that a few associations, small, comparatively, in numbers, feeble in means, limited in resources, are doing all that is doing, or can be done for the promotion of peace. They might well look upon us, as weak, romantic, narrow minded and deficient in a knowledge of mankind, if we expected that our exertions were in a moment to eradicate an evil which has been engrafted upon the political institutions of mankind for nearly sixty centuries. There are deeper, mightier causes at work, whose operation it is our humble duty to attend and promote. It is the spirit of the Age, and the spirit of Christianity upon whose influence we depend for the ultimate accomplishment of our objects. It is the broad stream of public opinion, whose current has borne down, and is yet bearing down before it, ancient abuses and long permitted oppression, which is at length to sweep

away in in its irresistible course, this relic also of barbarous ages. We may limit, guide and controul, though we do not create it. We may assist in giving it a direction which shall promote the peace and happiness of mankind, though its origin is beyond our knowledge or our power.

There are many considerations suggested by the present state of the world, which may show, not only that the objects we propose are in themselves possible, but that progress has actually been made towards their accomplishment. It may, in the first place be remarked, that as great a change has already taken place in the character of war and in public opinion, with regard to its nature and objects, as must be further produced in order to its total abolition. In the early stages of society, war forms a part of the business, the amusement—nay the very education of a whole people. It takes place in their attention, their pride and even their affections, of hunting, agriculture and the arts of life. It is pointed out by the old, to the young, as a field for the exercise of the most honorable ambition. It forms the theme and almost the only theme of the songs of their poets, and enters into the essence of their religion itself. The feelings which have their origin, at this period, continue to influence a people, when they have become enlightened and refined. Long after nations have discarded the rude manners and many of the barbarous institutions of their ancestors, they have retained their ferocious spirit in war. No man, although he may entertain the common notion

of its justifiable nature, and have been conversant with the history of modern warfare in its most horrid details, can review the history of ancient Greece at the period of her greatest refinement—the period of her Aristides, her Themistocles, her Pericles,—without being shocked at the scene of injustice, treachery and savage brutality which it presents. Admire he must, the great and commanding characters which were exhibited. Elevated talents exerted upon great occasions, it is not in human nature to refrain from admiring, let the cause in which they are exerted be what it may; but if he possess the common feelings of humanity, he must shudder and grow sick at heart, over the bloody tragedies which that history displays to his view. His pride in the greatness of human intellect, will be more than balanced, by his shame at the debasement of the human heart.

War was in former times an occupation in which the passions of hatred and revenge were indulged to their utmost extent, and an enemy viewed as an individual object of animosity. It has become in our own day a cool and calculating science, in which army is opposed to army, and not man to man. It furnishes an arena into which commanders and their troops enter to contend for the palm of victory, and not for the gratification of personal resentment. All nations seem to vie with each other, which, when the work of blood is concluded, shall treat the wounded or imprisoned enemy with the greatest consideration and humanity. Inconsistent as this

is—this preposterous alliance between barbarity and humanity—it yet furnishes us with ground for expectation, that the principles which have already produced so great a change, will produce one which is complete and consistent. Doubtless the day will come, distant though it may yet be, when modern war, will be viewed with the same unequivocal and universal abhorrence, that we now entertain for the atrocities of ancient warfare.

How many circumstances denote that the change in public opinion is taking place more rapidly than ever. Three centuries ago, the complaint of Peace was made in vain, and the learned and benevolent Erasmus died, without reaping in this world the reward of his labors. The amelioration which has been hitherto effected, has not been the result of direct efforts, but the consequence of the gradual improvement which has taken place in the moral condition of man. But efforts are now making with this particular object. The benevolent and the pious in all parts of the earth, are now united in this cause. Formerly, so much were we influenced by the force of early prejudices, by the associations of pomp, glory and honor, connected with war, so blind were we to its enormity, that we did not perceive how entirely it was at variance with those fundamental principles of right and justice which we entertained. But our eyes are now opened, and we are astonished at the hideousness of the monster which society has so long cherished in her bosom, and fed upon her best blood. I appeal to any one of my hearers

whether he has not known the day, when the proposition that war was criminal and unnecessary, struck him at first as new, strange and untenable; and if he were not still more incredulous, when it was asserted that its abolition was possible, and that to attempt it was a duty; and yet I trust, there are many around me, who now perceive in this proposition no paradox, and in the attempt no impossibility.

But there is no circumstance, in the present aspect of the world, which appears more auspicious to the prospects of humanity, than the change which is taking place in the views entertained of the nature and objects of government. There is a decided tendency towards what are called liberal institutions—institutions founded upon a regard to the rights and happiness of mankind at large, and not of a privileged few. To the prevalence of these, I apprehend, next to the influence of religion, we are to look for the final and total abolition of war.

It is a circumstance sufficiently obvious, that war has in general proceeded from causes, not necessarily connected with government itself, but with the nature and constitution of those forms of government which have principally prevailed. The evil has been, that rulers and people have formed two classes entirely distinct, of different feelings, different interests, and even a different blood. By a most unhappy constitution of human society, the natural and equitable order of things has been reversed; the people have been made to live for the rulers, not the rulers for the people. A nation has been sup-

posed to appertain to its government as a kind of property, to be disposed of and controlled for its own ends, and not for the happiness of the individuals composing it. To this objection, liberal forms of government are not liable. The interest of both rulers and people, must be identically the same; the power springing in the first place from the people, remains always accountable to them, and returns to their hands when their interests are neglected or their rights violated.

It will be perceived that in such governments, some of the most fruitful sources of war are removed. In those of an arbitrary character, war is merely an affair of the government; the feelings and interests of the people are not consulted. A contest may be maintained for years, to which the mass of a nation are entirely opposed, whilst yet their treasure is expended and their blood shed in its support. The ambition of a minister of state, the restless activity of a monarch, the love of glory in a favorite commander, have proved sufficient to light up the torch of discord, and blast with it the fairest portions of the world. This could not happen among nations governed by institutions dependent upon the people. Separated from them, the arm of government has no power; deprived of their confidence, it must fall by its own weight. Nothing seems more clear, than that a free government must fail in the prosecution of a contest, which is not supported by public opinion, and by the cordial co-operation of the people. Such are the intolerable evils of a state of war, such the miseries it entails, that nothing can reconcile to

it the mass of a nation, except some strong political enthusiasm, or some high moral excitement; and few of the ordinary causes of war are adequate to this effect. Nothing but the defence of national territory or an invasion of vital and essential rights can produce in the people themselves a hearty and continued support of it. A war of the government alone, springing from personal views, and intended merely for personal or even for national aggrandizement, could hardly continue for an hour.

It is another evil connected with arbitrary governments, that they require for their support, the existence of a military establishment; and the mere existence of such an establishment, serves in many ways to promote and keep up the custom of war.

It creates in a nation, a class of men, whose profession is arms; whose rank, reputation, and emolument all depend upon the existence of a state of hostility, and whose interest therefore it is to promote it. But this is not the whole nor the principal evil. There is this greater danger, that this class of men have a powerful influence over those in whose hands the destinies of nations are placed. The throne and the army are intimately connected and mutually dependant. The monarch looks to the soldier for the support of his power; the soldier to the monarch for the reward of his victories. Those who have distinguished themselves in war, must be provided for in peace, and hence the principal offices in the administration of affairs are placed in the hands of military men. Monarchs love to gather around their thrones, in posts of

trust and emolument, those subjects who have been distinguished in arms. They feel themselves stronger and more secure by their association and support: whilst on the other hand, their great influence will be naturally exerted in favor of that profession by which they have risen. With them war in itself is a desirable object; they promote it for its own sake. The question with them is not, is war necessary? but only, cannot we find a sufficient excuse for it? It were reason enough for them, that their army and their navy were degenerating in discipline for want of employment.

In governments thus constituted, military glory becomes a personal object of ambition, with the monarch as well as with his warlike associates. He feels ambitious that his reign should be distinguished in history for the glory of his arms and the extension of his dominions. This is a feeling which has no necessary connexion with the opinions or feelings of his subjects. Their fields may be laid waste; their hard earnings wrung from them, and their sons torn away to fill up the ranks which battle has thinned, although the objects to be attained have no reference to their happiness or prosperity.

In such governments, the monarch and every thing connected with the throne, wears a military aspect. The king himself is the head of the army; his family are provided for by posts of high honor; his principal counsellors are taken from the ranks of war. The insignia and pomp of arms accompany him wherever he moves. Every thing tends to keep in mind the existence of the custom of war, and to

present it to the people in its most favourable aspect. Who are made governors of provinces and ministers of state? Who are the most prominent candidates for titles of nobility? Successful soldiers! Trace back the hereditary nobles of any country to their origin, and you find that the good fortune and elevation of their ancestors has been founded upon military reputation; and in the eyes of by far too large a portion of mankind, no origin could be more honorable.

From these dangers, governments founded upon liberal principles are in a great measure free. The permanent existence of a great military establishment is almost impossible. The people, always impatient under the load of taxation, often unreasonably so, will never permit themselves to be burdened with an apparatus so costly and so useless. Government needs no array of guards for its protection; it needs no extraneous support to give it dignity and authority in the eyes of its subjects, for it is in itself only a delegation of their power. Military men, as such, have no controul, and little influence. They have no weight beyond that derived from their personal character, talents and services. The community in a free country are jealous of a standing army, jealous of military men, and justly so; for if it be ever destined that by the course of internal revolution, arbitary power shall set its foot upon their rights and trample their liberty in the dust, these are the instruments by which that purpose will be accomplished.

Among nations whose governments are founded

upon these principles, one class of wars would almost necessarily cease at once to exist, I mean those which have been entered into to settle claims of hereditary right. A slender acquaintance with history will show how long, how frequent, and how bloody have been the contests originating in this source. Questions of legitimate succession have been debated by fire and sword, from the most remote antiquity to which the records of history reach. Nations have been in arms to determine, by this last appeal, between the degrees of consanguinity of rival candidates to a vacant throne. Civil strife has raged for centuries, nay almost through its whole history, in one of the proudest nations of Europe, growing entirely out of the same cause. And in our own days, has not all the christian world been engaged in a contest, which, whatever might have been its objects at some periods of its continuance; and whatever might have been the motives of some of its abettors, originated in the defence of hereditary right and terminated in the accomplishment of its object.

The happy influence of such principles of government is well illustrated in the spectacle presented by our own country, the only one in fact in which they have been fairly put to the test. The independent sovereignties of which it is composed, have, like distinct nations, conflicting claims and conflicting interests; jealousy, rivalry, heart-burnings must exist; contentions arise upon points of great importance where the passions become powerfully excited, and yet all parties are satisfied with an appeal to a judicial tri-

bunal, whose decision is final. Upon far more trifling occasions the Grecian states have waged wars almost interminable. We have but to imagine each of our commonwealths transformed into a little kingdom, with its monarch, its train of hereditary nobles, its navy, its army, and the host of ambitious aspirants that surround a throne, and our hitherto peaceful continent would present only a scene of strife, turbulence, and bloodshed. We should then hear of nothing but the jealousy and rivalry of princes; of leagues and confederations; of the balance of power, and of wars waged to regulate it. Our rivers would serve, as they have in the old world, as barriers between natural enemies. Our lakes would become the theatre of stormy contention between rival nations. Our seaboard would exhibit the spectacle of hostile fleets engaged in scenes of blood and carnage. The picture drawn of the old world, would be realized in the new.

> Lands intersected by a narrow frith
> Abhor each other; Mountains interposed
> Make enemies of nations, who would else
> Like kindred drops, have mingled into one.

It may be deemed an objection to the view of the subject which has been taken, that the history of republics does not confirm it. There are some who contend that the genius of republicanism is warlike, and that our character like the character of the republics of antiquity is marked by a tendency to war. To this opinion, with regard to ourselves, our whole history, it seems to me is decidedly opposed. Of the argument derived from the ancient commonwealths

it may be remarked, that as, on the one hand, liberal principles of government may exist without the republican form, so on the other, the republican form is not necessarily founded upon liberal principles. The ancient republics were any thing rather than what we call liberal. Of equal, well regulated liberty—of the proper rights of mankind, they had no true conception. The freedom of which they boasted so much, and of which we are told so much, amounted only to a licentiousness for themselves, founded upon the subjection and slavery of others. There is scarcely a government in existence at the present day, which does not in reality make a nearer approach to an acknowledgment of the proper liberty of mankind, than the Athenian republic. Even in the community of Athens itself, where was the security for personal rights! To be truly free is not merely to be delivered from foreign bondage, or the yoke of a tyrannical monarch. Kings and conquerors are not the only source from which our liberties may be infringed. We require to be protected from one another, and I know not whether a just man has not more to fear from the jealousy of a despotic mob, than from that of a despotic monarch. And then if we extend our view to the confederate states which formed the larger part of the Athenian empire—where were their liberties—what regard was paid to their rights! The city of Athens exercised over these states, an authority as arbitrary as that of the most despotic of monarchs. Never was a more galling yoke laid upon the necks of subjugated nations. And the tyranny

they endured was not the less intolerable; that it was tyranny exercised by the numerous, turbulent and unreasonable populace of a free city.

Republican Rome exhibits a far more honorable spectacle, so far as regards the internal regulations of the state, and the institutions and privileges which affected Roman citizens. Yet even these were not the offspring of well defined notions of right. The privileges of the poor, were on the one hand, wrung slowly and often with violence, from an unwilling and haughty aristocracy; and on the other hand, the rights and precedence of the rich and noble were with difficulty preserved from the encroachments of popular violence. But viewed in its most favorable aspect, it exhibits not what we should call well regulated liberty. Rome was subject to no other nation, and so far the republic was free; but the Roman citizen was not therefore free, as we are free. He had not that impregnable security for freedom, property and life, which we possess. And besides, can we admit that people to possess a just knowledge of the principles of human right, who, free themselves from a foreign yoke, seek to impose it upon others. The Roman legions, free if they were, were never the ministers of liberty. They associated with the feeble against the strong, that they might the better enslave both. They offered succour to subjects who were suffering under the oppression of their kings; they cherished kings dethroned by their revolted subjects; their arms were open to receive—their hand ever ready to avenge and redress the injured; but there was a deep, design-

ing, and selfish policy at the bottom of all this apparent magnanimity. It was their ruling principle that Rome should absorb into herself the power and dominion of the whole earth; that all other nations should only form a part of this imperial whole; not as partakers of her power and equal partners of her greatness, but as servants and subjects.

If these views be founded in truth, there is no reason, from their example, to fear that the policy of liberal governments will ever be warlike, whilst every thing in the principles themselves on which they are founded lead us to the expectation that it will be eminently peaceful. Till it can be proved that the happiness and prosperity of the mass of mankind, are promoted by the miseries and calamities of war, we must believe that popular institutions will always be pacific. It is true that in order to the complete effect of such principles, they must prevail more universally, and influence mankind more extensively than they now do, and to this, as has been already remarked, the spirit of the age seems directly to tend.

It is not necessary to advocate indiscriminate innovation upon established institutions. It is not necessary to the results for which we hope, that nations should dethrone their kings and banish their nobles, it is only nocessary that the principles by which they govern, and the tenure by which they hold their rank, should be made consistent with the rights and liberties of mankind. It were to be hoped, that this change might take place gradually

and peacefully; but it is, I fear, a mournful truth that it cannot and will not. It is a sad reflection, that the work which is to end in peace, cannot be accomplished by peaceful means. But it is useless and worse than useless to deceive ourselves. By cherishing delusive expectations of permanent peace, from the tranquillity which at present pervades those parts of the old world which have been the principal theatre of war for many ages, we are but preparing for ourselves a bitter disappointment. There is nothing in the relations of the kingdoms of Europe, nothing in the character of their rulers, nothing in the principles by which they govern, that can authorise such hopes. The claims and immunities of the privileged orders are too dear to them, to be lightly relinquished. They will not be relinquished without a struggle. Every thing indicates a resolution to grasp and defend them to the last. We cannot call the repose of Europe—peace! Is it for peace that within her limits, more than a million of soldiers are in arms? Is it for peace that her navies are sent abroad on the ocean for discipline? Alas for our cause, if we hope to witness its immediate success, whilst affairs are presented under this aspect! When was ever peace maintained by means like these? When were its ministers a standing army, and a disciplined navy?

But we may at least hope, that Providence, which from seeming evil still educes good, will give to the contests of nations a new character. That the result of future wars will be to establish mankind in the enjoyment of such rights, and place govern-

ments upon the basis of such principles, that the causes and consequently the practice may be banished from the world. And so long as its elements still exist in the institutions and relations of society, it is surely encouraging that they should take this direction. It is surely auspicious to the best interests of our race, if men must for awhile, practice the lessons of blood they have learned from former ages, that they should do it in defence of their dearest rights—that if they must draw the sword at all, it should be in maintenance of those principles, whose ultimate triumph will alone perpetuate peace.

These views I believe to be important, because if well founded they afford sufficient ground for assurance of final success, and furnish an answer to those who argue from the present aspect of the world in discouragement of our object. Our cause will be injured, by the indulgence and expression of premature hopes of immediate influence upon the affairs of nations. Long continued evils cannot be suddenly rooted out. All mankind are not yet prepared for those changes which must precede and accompany the abolition of war. The evil is connected with so many other vicious customs, that a sudden reform is almost an impossibility. We cannot hope to effect, either in society or individuals, a reformation in one particular vice, while we leave the general character stained by a multitude of others. Such a reformation at least cannot be permanent. You may perhaps induce a drunkard to relinquish his favourite indulgence, by a represen-

tation of its injurious consequences to his health and reputation; but you cannot depend upon the continuance of this change, if you leave him a gamester, a liar and a thief. And so too if we could force upon society, by strong appeals, the practical experiment of the relinquishment of war, we could hardly hope for its permanence, whilst we left to the world the sins of avarice, revenge, ambition and the love of power, and while those institutions continued to exist which have always promoted and still perpetuate the custom.

I am persuaded, therefore, that we are to depend principally upon the gradual amelioration in the character and condition of our race, which we believe to be taking place, both politically and morally. But in the mean time much is to be done to promote this change, and more particularly to open the eyes of mankind to the enormity of the evils under which they have so long suffered. The subject of war is to be presented regularly and perseveringly in its true colours—and the prejudices which have been connected with it from education, association, and false ideas of patriotism are to be dispelled. This seems to be the proper province of such societies as this which I have the honor to address. In this path their endeavors have already been productive of salutary and extensive influence. It is no proof that their labours have been ineffectual, and it ought to operate as no discouragement to their hopes, that the prospects of continued peace are often interrupted. If I have not erred in the remarks I have made, it will follow, that the bonds of union between nations

may be repeatedly broken, that war may be many times rekindled and yet the cause which we advocate be steadily advancing. The object of associations for the promotion of peace, is not merely to perpetuate the present partial interval of repose, but to extinguish, thoroughly and forever, the very elements of war, and thus radically remove it from human society.

On the day of this religious festival, appropriated with such happy consistency to the annual celebration of this society, we are reminded with more than common force of the lessons which Christianity teaches upon the subject we have been considering. The same command which forbids man to seek in anger or in malice the life of his fellow man, forbids also, that nation should rise up against nation in civil contest. It is in vain that we endeavor to draw the line, between the acts of nations and the acts of individuals. This is a refinement which just reasoning does not admit. War is the offspring of the same propensities that in private life lead on to violence, rapine, and murder. It engenders the same bad passions, which if indulged in the daily intercourse of mankind would stamp one as a ferocious ruffian. And what is there in the nature, the causes, or the objects of war which should give to actions a different character. The cause of a people is not in itself more sacred than the cause of an individual. Personal rights are as dear, and as dearly to be defended as national. And is not national crime as much to be deprecated—national virtue as strongly to be desired ?

The intercourse of nations has too often exhibited a mournful spectacle to the eye of the plilanthropist and the christian. Those principles which even among the most lawless of mankind it has been held dishonourable to violate in the private relations of life, have been trampled upon without hesitation or shame. The very men who would be indignant in their personal concerns, at the bare suspicion of treachery or duplicity—who would shudder at the thought of shedding human blood with their own hand—have been content as ministers and monarchs, coolly and deliberately, to build up a monument of glory, out of the ruins of broken treaties, violated faith and perjured vows, cemented with the blood of thousands.

But Christianity acknowledges no such partial distinctions. Its empire was intended to be, and it will be, universal. Nations as well as men, must at last submit to its benignant influence. The feeble-minded are sometimes inclined to despair, because it has existed so long, and so much yet remains undone—because men are still vicious and criminal and violent—and nations are still contentious and hostile. Let them reject a view so unjust and unworthy.—Let them reflect, not upon what Christianity has not done, but upon what it has! It has almost given to the world the proudest virtues of our race—philanthropy and benevolence. It has almost created domestic life—for, where upon the face of the earth, in ancient or in modern times, in the dwellings of civilized or of savage man, do we find the virtues of the parent, the child, the sis-

ter and the brother gathering as they do around the fireside of the Christian! What has Christianity done for mankind!—What, I might almost ask, has it not done? Has it not civilized the savage—comforted the poor—bound up the broken hearted—softened human misery—elevated human virtue! Is it not now striking from the limbs of the oppressed African the fetters of his ignominious bondage? And shall we despair of its final triumph over all human guilt and wretchedness? It cannot be. The day will come though our eyes see it not, and our ears hear not of it, when its influence shall have become as extensive as the world—when its triumph shall be complete—when it shall succeed in establishing that which it was its principal object to inculcate—"peace on earth and good will towards men."